

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Price  
Chairman  
Budget Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
Ranking Member  
Budget Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Lead Pelosi, Chairman Price, and Ranking Member Van Hollen,

As the Budget Committee works towards a federal budget, we write to urge you to preserve the integrity of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and not block grant one of the most powerful tools we have for ending childhood hunger in the United States today. We are greatly concerned that block granting this vital safety-net program will be robbing a program of its greatest strength: its ability to expand in times of economic or natural disaster, and then retract when conditions improve.

For more than four decades, SNAP has been a fundamental bulwark for the poorest and hungriest people in our nation. Deemed “a government reform that worked” by the National Journal, SNAP serves as the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. In fact, SNAP is such a success, that in 2014 the program helped lift 4.7 million Americans out of poverty, including 2.1 million children. Additionally, when compared to other government programs, SNAP is far more effective than any other program in lifting families out of deep poverty. SNAP is also successful at reaching key vulnerable populations. Three-fourths of SNAP households are families with children, seniors, or people with disabilities. And because SNAP benefits are so urgently needed by families, they are spent quickly--97 percent of benefits are redeemed by the end of the month of issuance.

By design, SNAP is able to react quickly and robustly to economic problems. When a regional, state, or area economy is in trouble, the program is among the most effective government responses and is able to reach those who need it most. This has been seen most clearly and dramatically since the start of the recession in 2008, when millions of people became

newly unemployed or underemployed. SNAP responded during this time to provide desperately needed help, and put food on the table for millions of American families. We also saw the same responsiveness in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Thousands of families sought safety and shelter in neighboring cities, and SNAP benefits were able to expand rapidly to meet the increased need in Gulf Coast states.

The SNAP program also has a strong work incentive. For every additional dollar a SNAP recipient earns, their benefits decline by only 24 to 36 cents — much less than in most other programs. Families that receive SNAP thus have a strong incentive to work longer hours or to search for better-paying employment. Furthermore, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the number of SNAP participants is expected to decline by over 11 million people over the next ten years, reducing budget outlays for the SNAP program by \$ 800 million. This is the beauty of the SNAP program in its current form; it increases support to the food insecure during times of economic hardship, and scales back spending as the economy grows and people return to work.

There has been much talk about changing the SNAP structure and turning the funds over to governors and state legislators as a block grant. For the 45 million Americans relying on the SNAP program, we urge you to reject this proposal. Shifting this program to a block grant, and limiting states to a set amount of funding, means that states would be faced with impossible choices as need increased: Do they cut benefits, or do they place children and seniors on waiting lists for food assistance? Doing so would roll back a generation of progress against very deep hunger, and destroy a bipartisan compact that has developed and sustained a strong and effective national nutrition safety net.

We firmly agree with the President, who said, “Food stamp recipients did not cause the financial crisis; recklessness on Wall Street did.” Instead of attacking the SNAP program, the House budget should focus on economic growth and job creation, including strengthening the SNAP program so that participants are better positioned to take advantage of education and work opportunities as the economy improves.

If SNAP is block granted, many millions of seniors, people with disabilities, children, struggling parents – working and unemployed – and others will suffer. Our country will also see more hunger and poverty, worse health and educational outcomes, and higher health costs. The nation as a whole will be weaker – morally, economically, and fiscally. Please stand with us in ensuring that the federal budget would not harm low-income households, increase hunger, and dilute SNAP’s strengths.

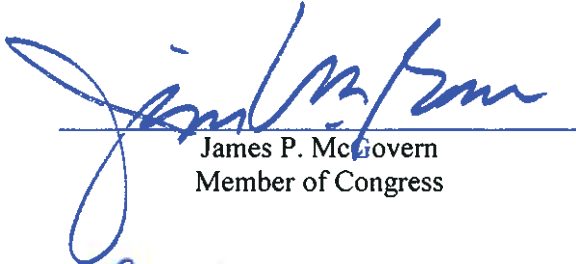
Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, PhD.  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



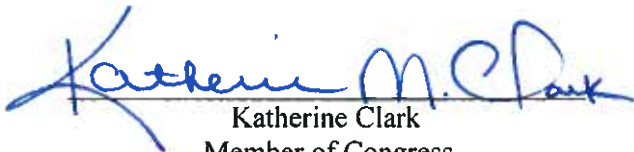
Ann Kirkpatrick  
Member of Congress



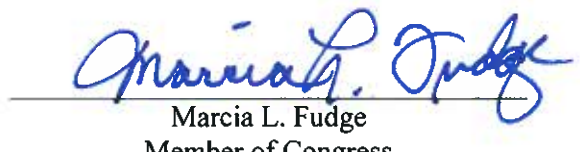
Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress



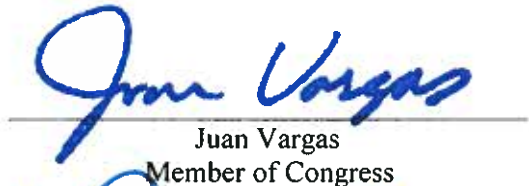
Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress



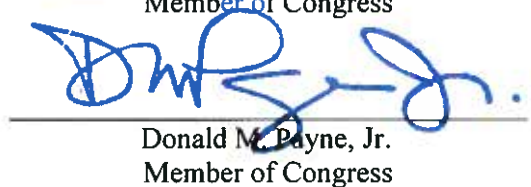
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



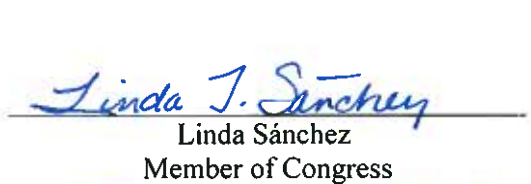
Louise Slaughter  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



David Scott  
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Linda Sánchez  
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress



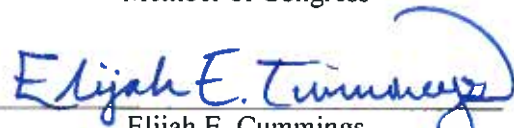
Robin Kelly  
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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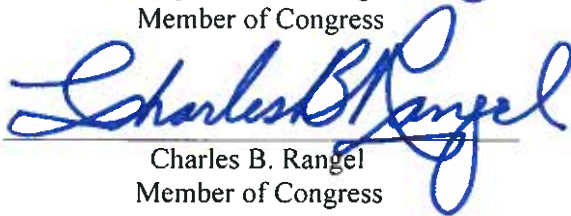
Henry "Hank" C. Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



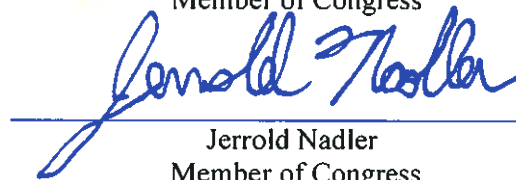
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



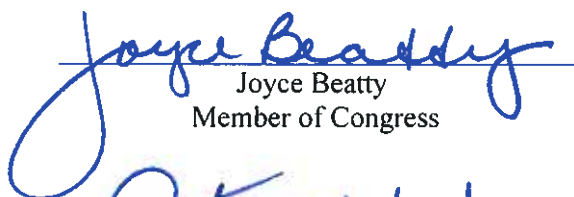
Susan Davis  
Member of Congress



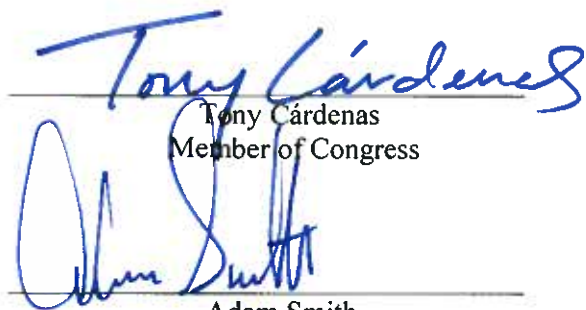
Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
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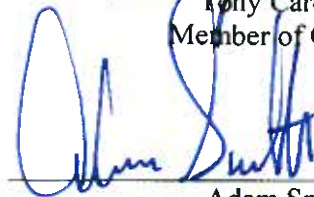
Joyce Beatty  
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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



Peter Welch  
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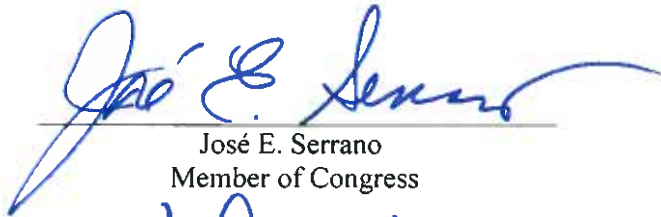
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson  
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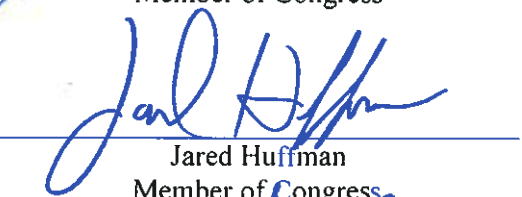
Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano  
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Elizabeth H. Esty  
Member of Congress



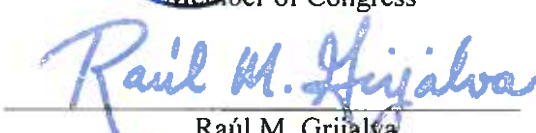
Jared Huffman  
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Henry Cuellar  
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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Joe Courtney  
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Mark Pocan  
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Doris Matsui  
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Mark Desaulnier  
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Michael E. Capuano  
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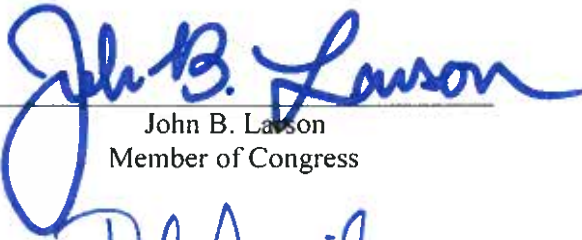
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



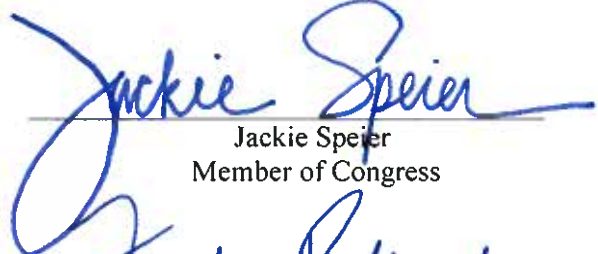
Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress



Richard M. Nolan  
Member of Congress



John B. Larson  
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Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress



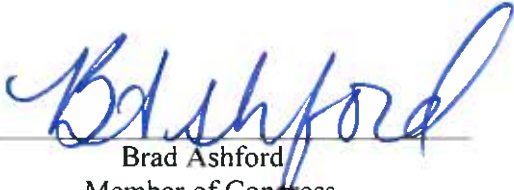
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress



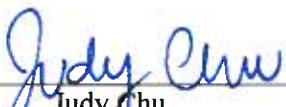
Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress



Brad Ashford  
Member of Congress



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



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Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Member of Congress



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Tim Walz  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
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Cedric Richmond  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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Frederica S. Wilson  
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
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Lois Capps  
Member of Congress



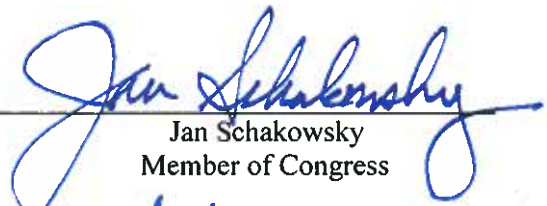
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress




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Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
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Barbara Lee  
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Nydia M. Velázquez  
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Ted Deutch  
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Keith Ellison  
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Donna F. Edwards  
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Luis V. Gutierrez  
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Scott Peters  
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Eric Swalwell  
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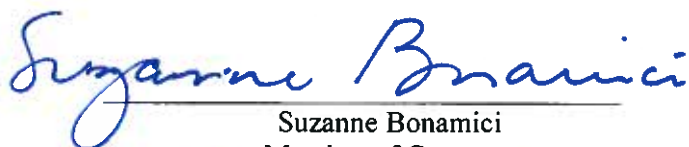
Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
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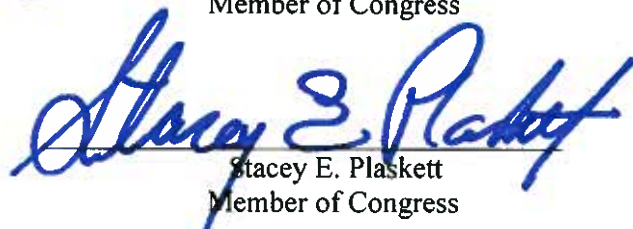
Denny Heck  
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Suzanne Bonamici  
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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
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Stacey E. Plaskett  
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Cheri Bustos  
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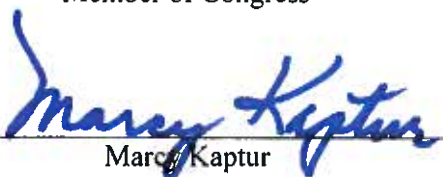
G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress



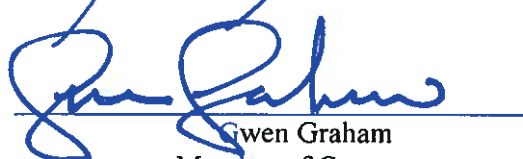
Sam Farr  
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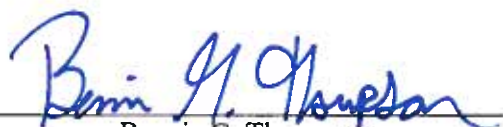
Albio Sires  
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Marcy Kaptur  
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Gwen Graham  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
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Alcee L. Hastings  
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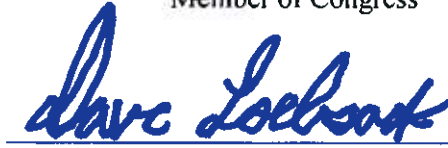
Brenda L. Lawrence  
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Bobby L. Rush  
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Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress



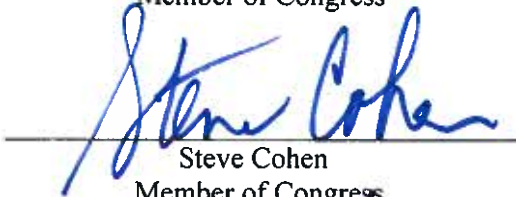
Dave Loebsack  
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Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



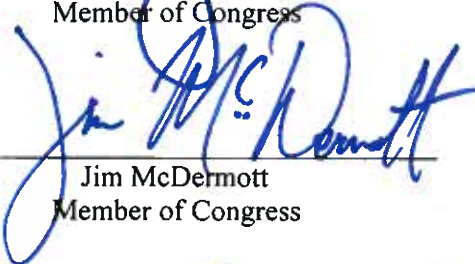
Mike M. Honda  
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Danny K. Davis  
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Seth Moulton  
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Jim McDermott  
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Dan Kildee  
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Debbie Dingell  
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Jim Langevin  
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Grace Napolitano  
Member of Congress



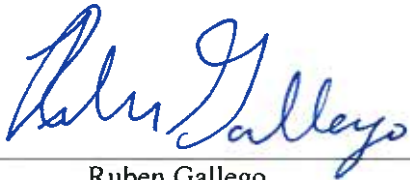
Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



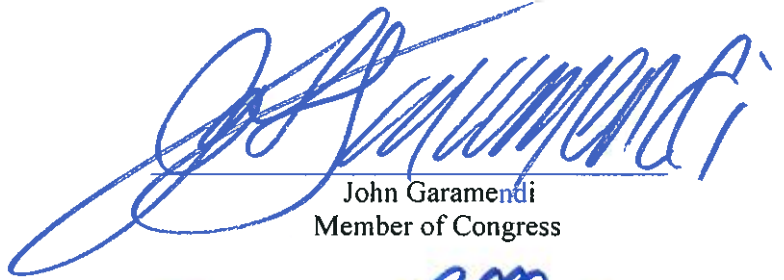
Zoe Lofgren  
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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



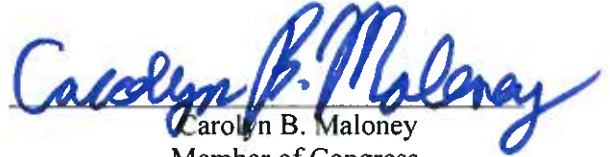
Ruben Gallego  
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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



Ami Bera  
Member of Congress



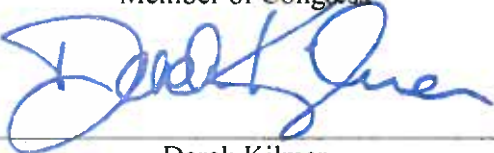
Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
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Derek Kilmer  
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Alan Lowenthal  
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Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
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Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



Andre Carson  
Member of Congress



Corrine Brown  
Member of Congress



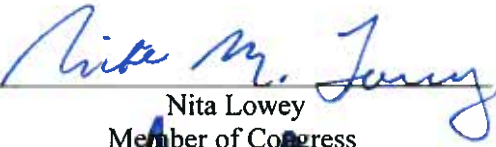
David Price  
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress



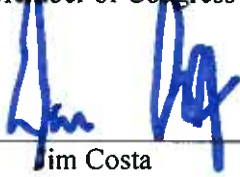
C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress



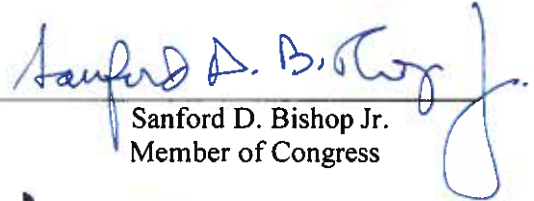
Nita Lowey  
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey  
Member of Congress



Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop Jr.  
Member of Congress



John Lewis  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress